

**Amendments to the Claims:**

Cancel claims 1-19, without prejudice.

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1.-19. (canceled)

20. (new) A method of distillation of ethanol from a mash, comprising the steps of:

feeding the mash into a first distillation column;

feeding a distillate of the first distillation column to a second distillation column;

and

at least one of purifying the mash before the mash is fed into the first distillation column and purifying a distillate from the second distillation column, the purifying being performed by a membrane separation process.

21. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the membrane separation process is a membrane process.

22. (new) The method of claim 21, wherein the membrane process is a dynamic cross-flow membrane filtration process.

23. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the mash is purified before the mash is fed into the first distillation column, and a permeate of the purifying of the mash is fed into the

second distillation column.

24. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the mash is purified before the mash is fed into the first distillation column, and a retentate of the purifying of the mash is fed into the first distillation column.

25. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the mash is purified before the mash is fed into the first distillation column, and a permeate of the purifying of the mash is mixed with the distillate of the first distillation column and fed into the second distillation column.

26. (new) The method of claim 25, wherein the mixed permeate and the distillate fed into the second distillation column is maintained in liquid phase at a boiling point.

27. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the mash is purified before the mash is fed into the first distillation column, and a permeate of the purifying of the mash and the distillate of the first distillation column are fed separately into the second distillation column.

28. (new) The method of claim 27, wherein the permeate and the distillate that are fed separately into the second distillation column are maintained in liquid phase at a boiling point.

29. (new) The method of claim 23, wherein a ratio of a retentate of the purifying of the mash to a permeate of the purifying of the mash is between 1:1 and 1:8.

30. (new) The method of claim 23, wherein a water portion of the permeate remains in liquid phase in the second distillation column.

31. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the distillate of the second distillation column has an ethanol concentration of 75-95 wt.%.

32. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the distillate of the second distillation column is purified, and the membrane separation process employs a plurality of parallel-connected membrane modules.

33. (new) The method of claim 32, wherein the distillate of the second distillation column is purified and is heated prior to being purified by the membrane separation process.

34. (new) The method of claim 32, wherein a portion of a retentate of the membrane modules is returned to each of the membrane modules as a flushing stream at a permeate side, and wherein after the portion of the retentate has passed through the membrane modules, the passed retentate is fed as a mixture with a permeate that forms in the second distillation column as a feed stream.

35. (new) The method of claim 32, wherein a permeate of the membrane modules is preheated by heat of a bottom product removed from the second distillation column.

36. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the mash is purified before the mash is

fed into the first distillation column, and heat of a final product or a bottom product of the second distillation column is used to preheat the retentate of the purifying of the mash.

37. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein a feed inlet of the second distillation column is equipped with a heat exchanger.

38. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the second distillation column comprises two separate distillation columns.

39. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the distillate of the second distillation column is purified, and the distillate of the second distillation column is heated prior to being purified.

40. (new) The method of claim 20, wherein the mash is purified before the mash is fed into the first distillation column, and the distillate of the second distillation column is purified.